

Message Text

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46

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-05 DPW-01 DHA-02 IO-13 EUR-12

ACDA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /097 W

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R 141005Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4669

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 28495

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT KHOMAN
REGARDING MILITARY TAKEOVER

1. BURKE AND I LUNCED TODAY (OCTOBER 14) WITH DR. THANAT KHOMAN
FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER WHO HAS BEEN CHOSEN AS FOREIGN AFFAIRS
ADVISOR TO THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM COUNCIL (NARC). THE
CONVERSATION COVERED A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS.

2. AS TO THE CABINET, PRIME MINISTER THANIM KRAIWICHIAN WILL BE
SELECTING OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THANAT OPINED THAT THE PRIME
MINISTER WOULD LIKELY SEEK TO FILL THE VARIOUS SLOTS WITH FRIENDS
OR COLLEAGUES WHOM HE HAS KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME AND WITH WHOM
HE MIGHT FEEL COMFORTABLE. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT THANIM WOULD
NOT BE SEEKING ANY POSSIBLY OVERSHADOWING POLITICAL FIGURES TO
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MAKE UP THE CABINET. THANAT STATED FIRMLY THAT HE WOULD NOT RPT

NOT BE THE FOREIGN MINISTER. INSTEAD IT WAS HIS OPINION THAT THANIM WOULD TURN TO THE PRESENT THAI AMBASSADOR TOOTTAWA, SAKON WANNAPHRUK, TO HOLD THAT PORTFOLIO. THANAT FEELS THAT SAKON WOULD BE A GOOD CHOICE BECAUSE HE WOULD ACT AS SOMETHING OF AN ANTIDOTE TO THE HIGHLY VOCAL ALMOST KNEE-JERK, ANTI-COMMUNIST STANCE WHICH THANIM HAS ASSUMED.

3. THANAT EXPRESSED A CERTAIN UNHAPPINESS WITH THE STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST STATEMENTS WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER-DESIGNATE HAS EXPRESSED SINCE HIS NOMINATION. THANAT FEELS THAT A STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST POLICY IS MOST USEFUL AND NECESSARY FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION. HOWEVER, THIS SHOULD BE BALANCED IN ORDER TO AVOID CREATING PROBLEMS WITH HANOI, VIENTIANE AND PHNOM PENH.

4. ON THE SUBJECT OF THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM COUNCIL, THANAT WAS GENERALLY APPROVING OF THE MILITARY TAKEOVER. HE FEELS THAT THERE WAS PROBABLY NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE, GIVEN RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE COUNTRY. IN HIS OPINION THE LEADERS OF THE NARC, ESPECIALLY ADMIRAL SA-NGAD AND GENERAL KRIANGSAK ARE REASONABLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL NOT BE PARTIES TO ANY REPRESSIVE MILITARY REGIME. HE THINKS THAT THE COHESION OF THE NARC IS LIKELY TO BE PRESERVED OVER THE NEAR TERM BUT EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE NARC SHOULD PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE "YOUNG COLONELS" WHO ACTUALLY COMMAND TROOPS TO INSURE THEIR INVOLVEMENT AND LOYALTY IN THIS GOVERNMENTAL EFFORT. THIS IS ESPECIALLY NECESSARY IN ORDER TO BLUNT ANY POSSIBLE COUNTER-COUP EFFORT.

5. THANAT SPOKE RATHER DISDAINFULLY OF THE PRAMOT BROTHERS, SENI AND KHUKRIT, OBSERVING THAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MOST COMFORTABLE IN AN OPPOSITION ROLE AND WHEN THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADERSHIP HAD BEEN THRUST UPON THEM THEY HAD NOT DEMONSTRATED ANY GREAT TALENT IN DISCHARGING THEM.

6. THANAT QUESTIONED ME REGARDING THE AMERICAN REACTION TO THE MILITARY TAKEOVER. I TOLD HIM THAT IT SEEMED CLEAR FROM THE INITIAL REPORTING THAT THE GOVERNMENTAL CHANGE WAS BEING VIEWED AS A RETROGRADE STEP AND A RETREAT FROM DEMOCRACY IN THAILAND. IF THIS FIRST IMPRESSION WERE REENFORCED BY REPRESSIVE AND ARBITRARY ACTS BY THE NARC WHICH APPEAR TO BE IN VIOLATION OF CONFIDENTIAL

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HUMAN RIGHTS IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE SAME CONSTITUENCY IN THE U.S. WHICH HAS BEEN VOCAL IN ITS CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT PARK AND PRESIDENT MARCOS MIGHT BECOME VERY CRITICAL OF THAILAND.

7. THANAT, THOUGH UNDERSTANDING THIS RISK, TENDED TO DISMISS IT WITH THE STATEMENT THAT IN ANY EVENT, REGARDLESS OF THE REGIME IN POWER, THAILAND COULD EXPECT LITTLE IN THE WAY OF FUTURE MILITARY OR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. EVERYONE KNEW THAT THE PROGRAMS

WERE BEING PHASED OUT AND THEREFORE LITTLE MATERIAL HARM WOULD RESULT IF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WOULD FIND THE NEW REGIME OBJECTIONABLE. MUCH MORE IMPORTANT TO THANAT WAS THE NECESSITY OF PROVIDING A FAVORABLE INVESTMENT CLIMATE IN THAILAND WHICH WOULD ATTRACT SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN CAPITAL. IT WAS OBVIOUS, IN HIS OPINION, THAT FOREIGN CAPITAL WOULD FLOW TO A WELL RUN NATION WHICH PROVIDED SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT, JUST AS IT HAD IN THE CASE OF SINGAPORE.

8. THANAT, TOWARD THE END OF THE CONVERSATION, SPOKE WITH SOME CONCERN ABOUT HANOI'S INTENTIONS. HE SAID IT WAS OBVIOUS TO HIM THAT THAILAND COULD NEVER MATCH THE VIETNAMESE SHOULD A CONVENTIONAL ATTACK BE LAUNCHED ACROSS THE BORDER. THUS IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT TO THAILAND TO ACQUIRE AND EXERCISE WHATEVER MEANS IT COULD --UNCONVENTIONAL, DIPLOMATIC, ETC.--IN ORDER TO PREVENT A VIETNAMESE MOVE AGAINST THE COUNTRY. BOTH BURKE AND I UNDERSTOOD HIS USE OF THE WORD "UNCONVENTIONAL" TO MEAN "NUCLEAR."

9. COMMENT. I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THANAT IS QUITE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD THE NEW REGIME, FEELING THAT THE RECENT DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATIONS OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES INCAPABLE OF PREPARING THE NATION FOR WHAT HE VIEWED AS THE IMPORTANT THREAT FROM VIETNAM AND LAOS. THOUGH HE DID NOT SAY SO, I HAVE THE FURTHER IMPRESSION THAT HE IS IN VERY CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE NEW LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY AND INTENDS TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ADVISORY ROLE.
WHITEHOUSE

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